

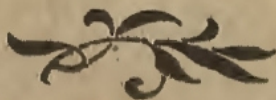
Le
Rugby Gallois

par

GEO. MERGAULT

Préface de PERGY-BUSH

Demi International Gallois



Vente Exclusive pour la France

G. BLOT-ROCHARD

Rue du Calvaire, 34 - NANTES

L'Exemplaire

0^f 50 franco



Les 12 Exemplaires

2^f 50 franco

PREFACE

This small Treaty of Rugby Football is addressed only to enthusiasts of this admirable sport.

We will find there are some assertions which will not fail, at first sight, to amaze; but, after reflection, readers will realise that their surprise was based only on erroneous conceptions of a game where the French temperament can deploy two of its most brilliant qualities: energy and vivacity.

GEO. MERGAULT.

This book has been translated from French by The Cardiff Rugby Museum using online translation services and some common sense. It is merely to allow English language readers a flavour of the excellent work of George Mergault who played for the Cardiff Reserves from 1907 to 1909

Our thanks to Hervé Padioleau for providing a copy of the original book.

My friend, Monsieur Mergault, has done me the honour of asking me to write a short preface for this work; I do it with great pleasure, but at the same time with the keenest hope that every footballer in France will kindly absolve me of any hurtful intentions towards them.

I am too much an admirer of France and its people not to feel, in the face of its countless achievements, feelings other than those of deep respect. My desire, in writing these few prefatory remarks, is quite simply to show how, in my modest opinion, it is possible to make French football even more the equal of the game as it is played in Wales. This natural pride in promoting Welsh Football will, I am sure, be forgiven me when I say that my way of acting is purely because we Welsh, from our very first beginnings, had to struggle against many difficulties and setbacks to make our way, until today we can proclaim ourselves at the top of the tree!

France must do the same. For a long time its athletes have begun this great march; in a speech which I made in Paris in 1906, I declared that they are entering the scene; they have already entered it by taking part in international matches.

We in Wales have discovered by

This page is missing from the original copy.

This page is missing from the original copy.

To conclude, I would like to urge France to continue its experiments; she should not be discouraged if a considerable number of points are stacked against her in international matches.

Years ago when we started out in Wales, England beat us by 13 tries (including 8 converted). Scotland literally walked over us, and after a while we couldn't get any more international matches because we weren't good enough !!!

Today we are doing quite well, thank goodness; France can do the same.

Jerry Bush

23. 11 09.

Some General Thoughts

Rugby is more than a science, it is an art. It demands on the part of those who devote themselves to it, not only natural qualities, but also work based on precise methods, a continual and patient training which will assure to the physically well gifted the finish which is characteristic of any fine work of art.

The spectator can have the science of Rugby, but it is up to the practitioner to become the artist, to develop his skills according to these scientific rules, to create, thereafter, a "personality", all the more powerful, as he participates, as harmoniously as possible, with the skilfully brought together combinations of his partners.

In Rugby, in fact, a personality has all the more value the more it contributes the most to a team's game. Imagine a work for the creation of which we have elected fifteen artists, with different temperaments, no doubt, but all with the same heart and soul and the same ideal; each of them, working for the same goal, will bring to the design and execution of the work, his initiative and his ideas, in a word, what constitutes his personality: the ideal of the work will never be changed because of this, and it will only be more beautiful and stronger...

In France, where we are only now beginning to learn this art, thanks to the incomparable Rugby lessons that the Welsh teams have given us over the past five years, the starting point was completely wrong. We wanted to see in this sport, all of skill and fine tactics, a pretext for shocking, for a brutal fight in which we could deliberately take revenge for feelings provoked by quarrels or other disputes; it followed that the education of the public

developed lamentably, in the midst of the din of absurd vociferations and bloody butchery; the best Rugbyens were, in their eyes, those whose brutalities were, either the most ardent, or the most beautifully concealed. Individual exploits, the most perilous leaps and the most incredible struggles are frantically applauded; it was believed that the somewhat famous runners and shot putters would inevitably be very brilliant three-quarters and titanic forwards; they immediately became the favourites of the crowd, and it was these people that our ignorant International Committees attacked: is it necessary to recall here the few routs, already historic, inflicted on us by the real Welsh footballers who are, in particular, neither wrestlers nor pedestrian champions.

Here is the first axiom: to redo our rugby education.

"But, the old people will say, (I heard him proclaim at a certain champagne evening), twelve to fifteen years ago we played football as masters, we knew our craft! "

It's a sweet legend, and a smile doesn't offend too much all those enthusiastic fathers who over-defend the fond memories of their youth.

Everything I will try to show in this little booklet is based on the theorem admirably demonstrated by Welsh football: **Defence is not the principle of Rugby; all the efforts of a team must be directed towards a superior attack.**

Immediately, I will answer this quite natural objection: "Whatever the game, isn't there necessarily a weaker, defending team?" That's right, but a defence tactic does not exclude any attempt to attack. Any team, however weak it may be, is never so inferior so as not to have, on several occasions, during a game, the opportunity to take advantage of openings, that a bad state of mind, determined by some pitiful routine, irreparably destroys.

The many matches I have participated in or seen in Wales could serve as a perfect example of what I am putting forward here. It was always the team that knew best how to take advantage of opportunities and create them, that the final advantage came to. This also explains why the results of the **Cardiff - Swansea, Newport - Cardiff, Newport - Neath, Llanelly - Swansea** matches often show a considerable total of points which amazes us here, in fact, we tried to score as many points as possible and not just prevent them from scoring.

It is completely understandable that a game can only be really exciting if it is scientifically conducted on both sides, that is to say free from any excessive and brutal zeal in the defence, but full of great tactics in the attack

It is therefore this game of attack that will be advocated here; I believe it to be the only one that can give the most profitable results and the only one truly worthy of interest to a sports public.

I THE HALF BACKS GAME

It has often been said that the outcome of a game depends on the play of the half backs.

"The half backs are the linchpins of a team", such is the established formula, but which does not appear yet, in France, to have been sufficiently understood and developed. At the start of this study, I believe it is absolutely necessary to specify the powerful and extremely delicate role of half backs.

I will immediately make a distinction, which, to make it clearer, I will illustrate with a striking example. Two years ago Cardiff and Swansea, Wales' two champions, had two pairs of half backs that were exceptionally characteristic of both ways of practising the attacking game. I recall the names so that those who have had the privilege of seeing them play or match against them, can judge for themselves that everything I am putting forward here is correct. I'm talking about the two pairs: Owen-Jones, for Swansea; David-Bush, for Cardiff.

Owen-Jones both played near the scrum; firmly concealed behind their forwards, one very close to the other, they seized the ball immediately out from the legs of their forwards, started, feigning, passing and repassing, and gave no play to their three-quarters until they had ensured, with a run, an opening of a few metres.

David-Bush, they placed themselves far from each other; David, small and robust, playing the scrum; Bush, an incomparable feinter and drop-goaler, usually standing 5-6 meters behind him. As soon as the ball came out of their side, David, seized it quickly, passed it with great force to Bush, who, finding himself thus in possession of the ball, and separated by a dozen meters from his adversaries, had enough time to be able to successfully lead the attack, immediately opening the game on the side of his three-quarters once they seemed to him to be in a better position.

The Owen-Jones combination is the most brutal and requires two "personalities" whose physical qualities must be strength and penetration.

Almost always, the Rugby Union of Wales elected them to

play against Scotland and England. Their work, against the Scottish and English forwards, excessively dangerous in dribbling, has always been crowned with success. It is better to say, to be fairer, that the Owen-Jones tandem has always prevailed in hard matches, while David-Bush triumphed in the games where their forwards led the dance.

You have to realise the exact difference between the two games of these two famous pairs of half backs. Owen-Jones' has more defence than David-Bush's; Jones is as much scrum half as an outside half, he's both; he supports his scrum half Owen, as well as he serves his three-quarters, and it's understandable why Jones has to back Owen. This, in fact, very often turns into a half opening; from then on, Jones becomes a double, always ready to assist his partner's attack by the way of standing or running alongside him. However, it should be noted that, like David, in the David-Bush combination, it is always Owen who takes the ball out of the fray.

Bush, on the other hand, is one of the most wonderful types of the open half that has ever existed in the United Kingdom. He is truly the backbone of his team. Thanks to him, the three-quarters never cease to have a brilliant game. It was he who, moreover, for a while, in Wales, had chosen to play at fifth eighths, depending on the combination, against, New Zealand.

The principle of his game is this: take care only of his three-quarters, put them at all times in an excellent position, create openings for them, and ensure that two of his three-quarters are finally facing the opposing fullback. David never opens up the game. He passes; and his pass is low and sharp, so his teammate Bush gets the ball as quickly as possible.

Bush being an incomparable drop-goaler, it often happens that, thanks to his position, far behind the scrum, he can achieve a goal. Thus, moreover, he often ensured the victory of his team.

Which of these two attacking games should we recommend?

Both methods are excellent, but above all we must admire the beautiful and pure Cardiffian tactics, which is the one that leads to the most brilliant combinations of the back lines. This is real scientific football, the one which offers the most resources to players of temperament, to "personalities." If a team has the rare pleasure of having an outstanding outside half, it is without hesitation that we must sacrifice to him, at least subordinate the other half back to him, at the scrum, to do a job à la David.

When, during the Anglo-Welsh team's tour in New Zealand, the Owen-Bush combination was put to the test; the result was so lamentable that never since have these two wonderful players played together. This small experience can therefore serve as a lesson for those of our leaders who imagine that two backs, individually brilliant, must combine in an faultless way.

In a selection, it is necessary to know how to sacrifice a halfback for another, according to the character we want to give to the game. It is quite certain, that in France, the results obtained to date are inferior to those which one could obtain, if one realised the value of a perfect homogeneity of the game of the halfbacks.

II THE THREE-QUARTERS

It's a team's luxury quartet.

A player must be gifted with excellent physical abilities to be able to occupy, with some chances of success, this very difficult

position. A three-quarter should be flexible, skilful, lively and quick. Self-control and great courage are indispensable to him. If he plays in the centre, he will need a great surety of passes and feints, as well as left and right kicks to touch.

A winger must above all avoid all hesitant runs: start quickly and run straight, these are the two qualities demanded of him.

A centre three-quarter is the link between the outside half and the winger; he completes the preparation of the try; collaborating in the movement outlined by the outside half, which must irresistibly put the winger in position to score.

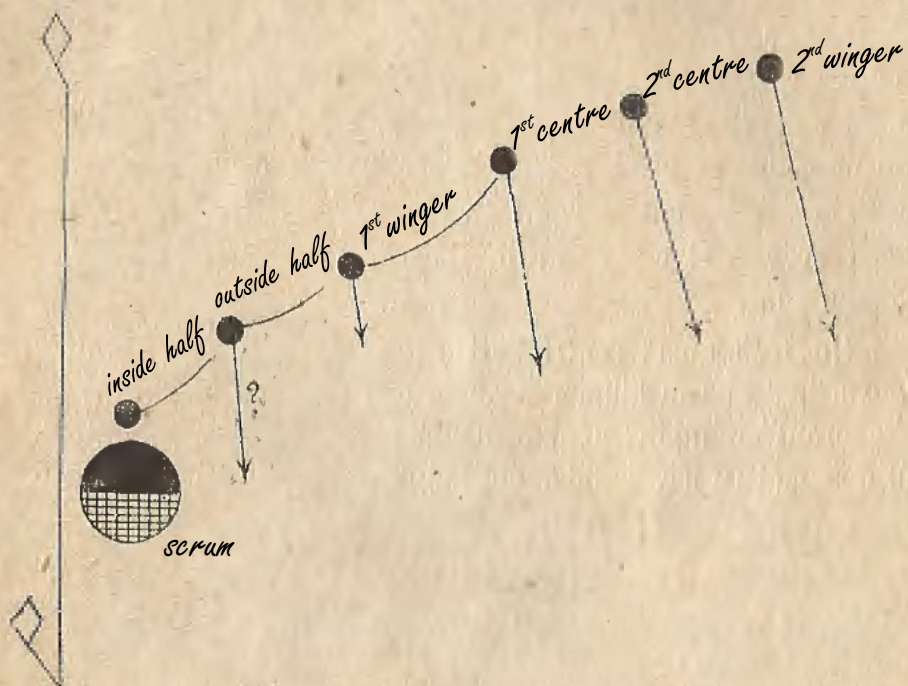
A three-quarter centre, in principle, should therefore never score tries; but it very often happens that in order to deceive the opposing defence which believes he is passing to the wing, an opening is created by a well-made feint.

One of the biggest flaws with our three-quarter lines is that they don't know how to start. They hesitate and thereby lose multiple opportunities, resulting in a fatal slowdown in our game, the cause of all our defeats in our matches against Wales.

The Welsh are not individually faster than us; no, a Lesieur has the speed of a Teddy Morgan; but, while the first, often through the fault of his three-quarter centre, never starts quickly enough, the second, on the contrary, admirably served by the Gabe and Nicholls can use his marvellous speed.

At scrum exit what should the layout of the three-quarter line be on the field?

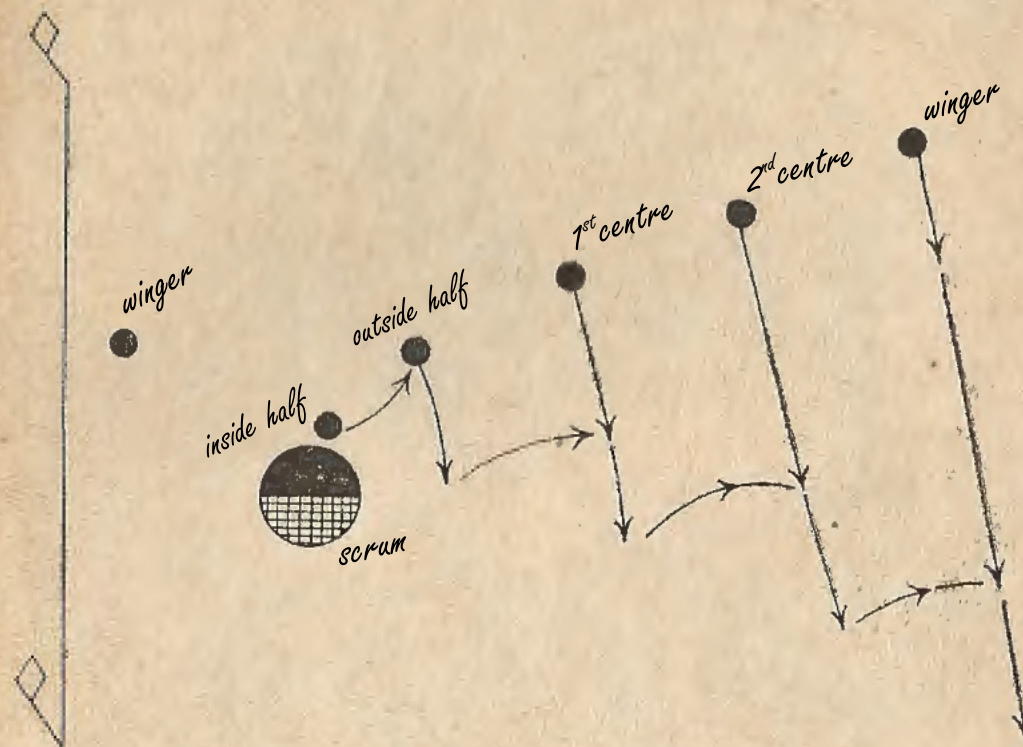
The following diagrams, with accompanying explanations, will give a clearer idea of Welsh methods.



1 ° The scrum takes place near the touchline. The three-quarters are ready to go, whether the ball comes out on their side or not.

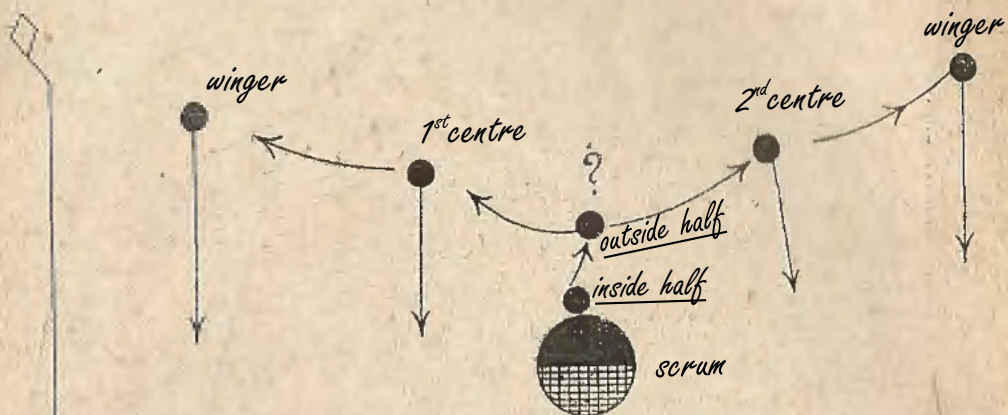
In the first case, the first winger will make sure, when he receives the ball from the hands of the outside half, to get rid of it by a quick pass to his three-quarter centre so as not to delay the attack. This three-quarter should facilitate the position of the other centre, so that he can give his winger every possible chance of scoring a try.

It is preferable for the outside half to pass straight to the centre, if he is not hampered, because, in this case, a pass to the first winger only slows the game down



2 ° The scrum is formed at a distance of about ten meters from the touchline.

The attack, on the open side, will only be made with three-quarters. The whole line would cover too much of the field, and unfortunate hesitation would result; moreover, in this case, a winger is greatly needed on the closed side, through which the opposing forwards, after having turned the scrum, could escape in dangerous dribblings.



3 ° The scrum takes place at or near the centre of the field. It is in this arrangement that the attack can develop in all its beauty.

This is why it is almost impossible to indicate the direction. It depends entirely on the decision of the outside half: he directs the movement of the quartet.

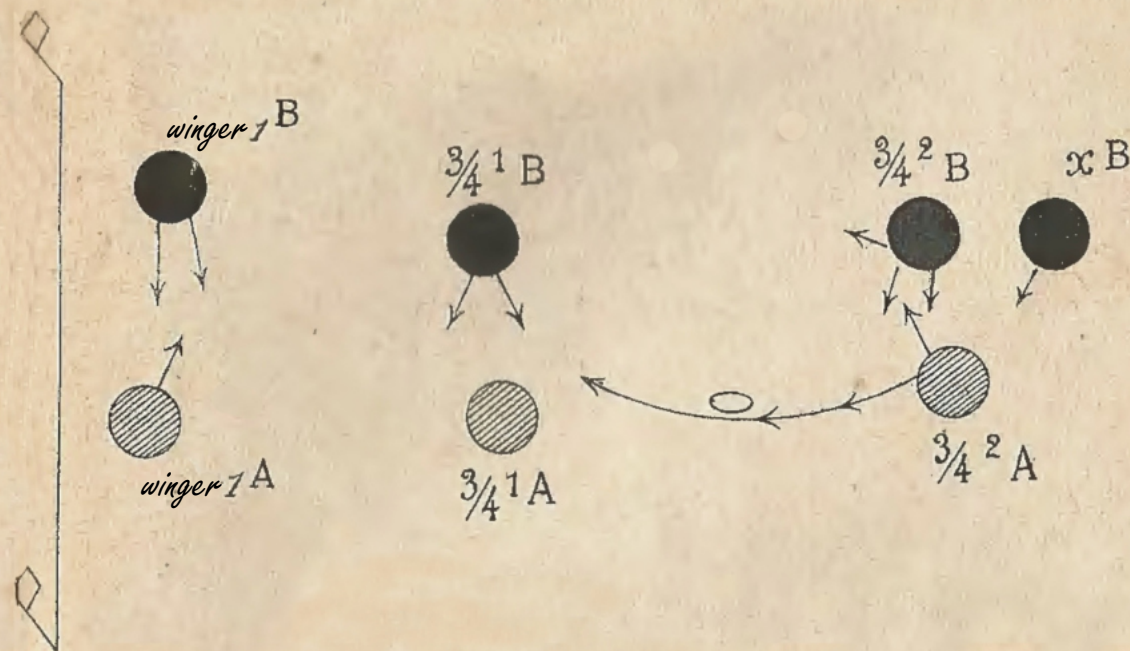
What seems to be missing most from our three-quarter centres is the mastery of feint that brilliant Welsh three-quarters possess, to such a high degree.

Here is the explanation of the art of feinting, as it was given to me, in training, by the famous Gwyn Nicholls;

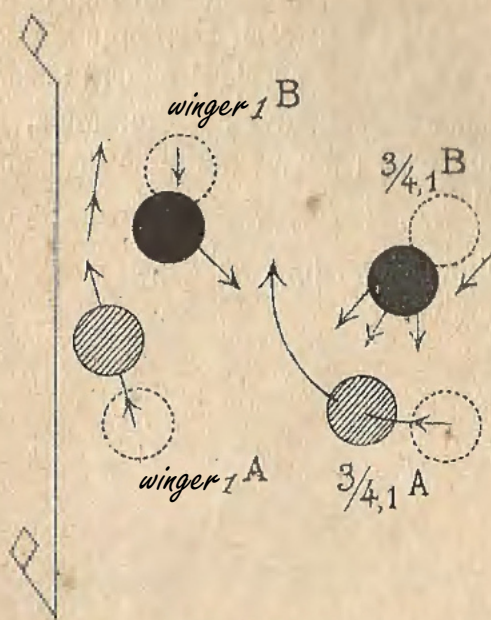
When a three-quarter centre charges, he must not run straight, but angle at a respectable distance from the opposing centre.

Reaching him, he must draw a movement as if he were trying to pass it; all this, of course, without hesitation. From then on, thanks to a slight stop, he can easily find the essential hole for his feint. But, let us repeat, what is needed above all is to run "around" the opposing three-quarter and not "at him".

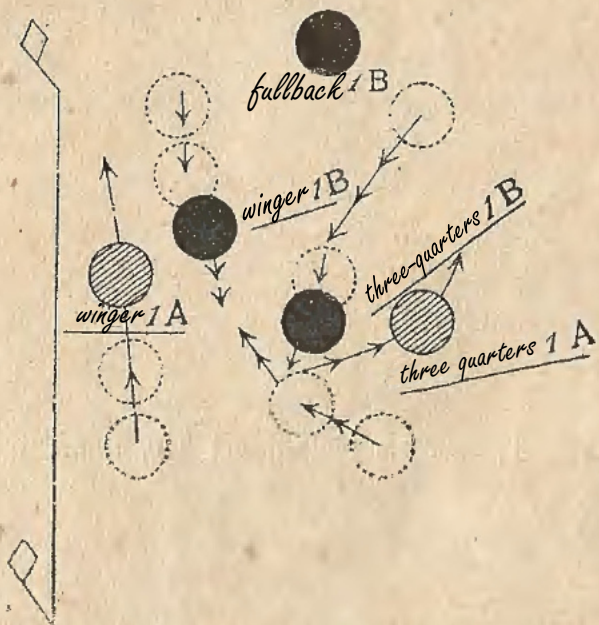
Here are some diagrams to illustrate what we have just said.



PHASE 1. - The three-quarter 2A, constrained, passes to the three-quarter 1A.



PHASE 2. - Three-quarter 1A slants towards the touchline, bypassing his opponent's three-quarter.



PHASE 3. - Winger 1B and three-quarter 1B will try

to stop three-quarter 1A, but the latter finds the essential hole, returning easily to the centre.

The 1A winger has followed along the touchline, and free, is ready to receive the pass from the centre three-quarter 1A, when he arrives behind him.

III THE FORWARDS

"All Welsh forwards are true three-quarters" such is the impression produced, indeed, by these incomparable players.

Yes, they are three-quarters, by their speed, their pace, their safety in passes and their kicks, which leave absolutely nothing to be desired. Their scrum is swift; their line-outs, powerful and mobile; they have only one goal: to give their back line possession of the ball.

What makes this scrum extremely fast is that none of the eight forwards has a sequence number; the first to arrive at the scene of the foul, puts his head in the scrum; all the others follow him, and yet, despite this apparent disorder, everything is carried out with the most admirable cohesion.

On the line of touch, in order to open the game at their back lines, one of the forwards, usually quite tall, moves continuously along his line, away from his opponent, and tries, in agreement with his inside half, to catch the ball with his fingertips, in order to immediately pass it behind him, to the outside half or to one of the three-quarters waiting for him.

It is this tactic, very productive in combinations, that the Welsh international forward O'Neill specialised; he became, so to speak, an outside half of the line-out.

It would be hoped that in our teams, one of the forwards would get used to playing this game; but of course that requires very great physical qualities, as well as a follow-up training.

The two major criticisms that we can currently make to our forwards is that they are awkward and too excessively individual. Our most brilliant Bordeaux and Parisian forwards are a long way away, from the flexible, quick, skilful and strong "forwards" of Wales.

However, it would be quite easy to achieve much better results with the group available to our national teams.

During Franco-Welsh matches, a very unpleasant impression has always been made to me by this expenditure of excessive energy and strength by our forwards, which was annihilated by their continual clumsiness.

In the end the game is a very fine one; it shouldn't be brutal. The most Johnstonesque punches are not worth the most discreet, but useful pass.

Let our forwards therefore practice passing and kicking; they should work on dribbling and above all they should abandon all unnecessary and ridiculous brutalities

IV

THE FULL-BACK

Any player entrusted with this position must be sure and brilliant.

In France, we make an absurd distinction between two types of full-backs: the good tackler and the good kicker: Isaac and Martin.

There is only one type of full-back: the one who tackles, but who, above all, by his skilful kicks to touch, knows how to avoid unnecessary and gruelling runs ahead.

Yes, above all, it is the good kicker to look for: the Winfield and the Bancroft are nothing else; their tackles may not be very powerful; but they are incomparable in their volley stops and their clearances to touch.

We often discussed the positions to occupy at the back, during a game.

A Welsh full-back is always placed close to his three-quarters and on the side of the touchline where the game is carried; he continuously follows the phases of the game, so as not to be surprised by any kicking or movement of the opposing team.

A full-back must never dodge his ball.

There is only one way to receive it: elbows to body, arms well bent; above all, avoid any stiffness, so that the ball, once received, does not bounce out of the arms. It has to be "cashed in", so to speak.

It goes without saying that any hesitation must be excluded here, both in stopping the ball and in the clearance kicks. What makes a full-back valuable is their quick decisions; he will never wait until he is charged too close to give his kick, and it is always towards the touch that he will direct it.

It takes considerable training to achieve the precision of a Winfield or Bancroft; but patient work could transform our backs completely. In the next chapter, I will indicate the methods used by the Welsh full-backs, for the practice of their kicks which amaze us so much.

From Welsh Training

When and how do the Welsh train?

My stay in Cardiff, during which I had frequent opportunities to mingle with famous footballers and to talk to them, allowed me to gain insight into their training methods.

All that will be found here is therefore only a true account of what I have seen myself and heard from the two trainers of Cardiff Football Club, Mr Intyre and Mr Nash.

First of all, a few words on the setup and operation of the Club. In a very well-appointed pavilion, on the field itself, the elected players, usually around forty (a team and reserves) have at their disposal everything their muscles and stomachs need: showers, massages, meals (tea, chocolate, bread rolls, fish, etc.).

There are two days set for this training, in Cardiff, on Tuesdays and Thursdays (matches are played on Saturdays). In high season, to avoid overtraining, players only come to Arms Park once a week. The duration of this training varies between half an hour and an hour; half an hour is enough for many.

But we do not stroll during that hour or half an hour; the training is divided into two stages: that of passing and that of kicking.

For the passes, a whole line of players, three-quarters, forwards, halfbacks, wingers, fullbacks, go through five or six charges of fifty yards (half of the field) of a series of fast and precise passes.

After this work, the players go in pairs along the touch, and practice their kicks, to the right or to the left, according to their respective positions, which they will change in order to improve with both feet. Finally, to finish, in a radius of about twenty meters, around the goals, we try drop-goals; some of the players "collect" the ball, and send it back to the drop-goalkeepers.

As soon as training is over, each player runs to take a lukewarm shower and is expertly massaged by the trainers.

Their appetite, moreover, can be satisfied free of charge, whether it is at one o'clock or five o'clock in the afternoon, because the club makes excellent food available to its players.

Now we come to a more detailed analysis of their passes and kicks.

Their passes first. - Principle: never pass the ball with one hand; this way of making the pass is defective and hazardous, does not allow a player to make a feint; the ball, in fact, held with one hand, the left, for example, cannot be passed in one direction other than the right; moreover, it is very difficult for a partner, especially on rainy days, when the ball is slippery, to receive it, because, thus thrown it usually turns and therefore does not arrive straight and safely in the hands of the partner to whom it is directed.

At first, perhaps, one will find some difficulty in executing a pass with both hands; but very quickly, after a few training sessions, a player will notice the superiority, and precision, of such a way of passing.

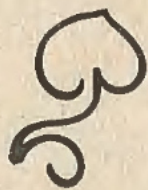
Nothing fancy just, a simple pass, quite hard, at the height of the belt; it is the most impossible to intercept and the one which offers the most guarantee in an attack.

We have already seen that the Welsh take turns in training

with the right and left foot, but how can a kick be aimed with precision?

This, without a doubt, depends on the angle given to the ball, at the exact moment it comes into contact with the foot that sends it back.

The ball must therefore be held with both hands, and not, as many of our players are used to doing, at the end of one arm. In fact, a precise angle cannot be given to it, if it is only held with one hand; it rolls fatally. It is only by the experience acquired in training that we manage to direct it exactly, depending on the intensity of the wind.



CONCLUSION

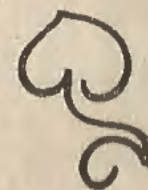
It would be very interesting, given the physical and moral qualities, peculiar to our race, to try to predict what will be, in the future and the way of playing Rugby that it will create,

Today we are advocating Welsh methods, but we will certainly not stop there; we will discover something else as the New Zealanders or even the South Africans did.

The aesthetic of our football, once well established, will not be the same as that of the Welsh. New combinations will be tried, perhaps even, we will see us adapting new arrangements of lines; but it is quite certain that to get to this, our players will first have to become impeccable feinters and kickers.

At the present time, let us content ourselves with studying Welsh demonstrations in football; it is certainly the one which best adapts to our national temperament.

By its great variety and its humour, its speed and its unforeseen developments, it offers us all the elements of an essentially French sport, which our educators, without a doubt, will soon notice.





Continental

Pneu-Auto

Continental

Pneu-Vélo

Continental

Tissu Aéroplane

Continental

Balles de Tennis

Les Sports

G. BLOT=ROCHARD

Rue du Calvaire, 34 - NANTES

(LOIRE-INFÉRIEURE)

Lawn-Tennis

Foot - Ball

Escrime

Golf, Etc.

CATALOGUE FRANCO